## **Herbert Hoover**

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site West Branch, Iowa



# The Son of West Branch, America's Great Humanitarian

An Aural Memoir by Dr. William Wayne Anderson, 2008 Artist-in-Residence at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

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Scene: Prologue	Date:	Location:	Characters: Narrator
Act I: The sick little boy	1876	Hoover Cottage	Hulda Hoover Tad Hoover Bert (Herbert Hoover) Jesse Hoover Dr. John Minthorn
Act II: Westward adventures	1885	Train	Narrator Sissy Toby Bert (Herbert Hoover) Mother Conductor
Act III: The college years	1894	Stanford University	Narrator Man 1 Edith Martha Charles
Act IV: Engineering opportunity	1896	Bewick's Office	Narrator Bewick Secretary Bert (Herbert Hoover)
Act V: The loyal leader	1915	Porch/German Office	Narrator Mother Child Colonel Schmidt Aide Hoover Jules
Act VI: The great Mississippi flood	1927	N/A	Singer Radio Announcer Herbert Hoover
Act VII: Return to West Branch	1928	West Branch	Mayor Reporter
Epilogue	1928	N/A	Narrator

#### Prologue

MUSIC: DRAMATIC MUSIC UP AND UNDER

NARR: Hail Columbia. Our land of freedom and opportunity. Their futures lying uncast,

each man born to shape and mold his own destiny. Fate left unchecked, the

mettle of the man weaves a fabric of tiny moments into the tapestry of a life well

spent or squandered.

MUSIC: SEGUE TO MORE PENSIVE MUSIC

NARR: Greatness forged from the fire of choices and tempered in resolve of betterment

for the brotherhood of mankind brings us to the threshold of a modest cabin on

the Iowa prairie.

SFX: SEGUE TO WIND SOUNDS OUTSIDE

The year is 1876.

Act I: The sick little boy

SFX: SEGUE TO SOUND OF CHILD COUGHING

TAD: Ma, Bert looks so sick. Why is he coughing so much? Will he be getting' better

soon?

HULDA: No, Tad. Looks like the croup still has its hold on him.

TAD: Poor Bert. Wish we could make him better.

SFX: SOUND OF KETTLE BOILING

HULDA: The kettle calls. If we give him a bottle of something warm, it might help

loosen up that cough.

SFX: SPOON IN TEACUP AND POURING OF WATER

SFX: HERBERT COUGHS SOME MORE

TAD: It's not fair that Bert's so sick. He's only two.

HULDA: That's just like the croup. When you get older like you, Tad, there isn't

much croup to get.

TAD: But Bert's gonna be all right, isn't he, Ma?

HULDA: I've sent for your Uncle John. He's the best doctor around these parts. Other

than that, we have to put our faith in God's hands now. Now, Tad, I need you to

watch Bert while I go out to the root cellar to get some beets for supper.

TAD: All right, Ma.

SFX: SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY AND DOOR OPENING THEN CLOSING

SFX: HERBERT COUGHING SOME MORE

TAD: There there, Bert. Have a bit more of this tea. That'll make you feel better, won't

it?

SFX: SOUND OF MORE, STRONGER COUGHING AND BABY WAILING

TAD: What is it, Bert? What's wrong? (yelling off mic) Ma! Ma! Come quick –

something's wrong with Bert!

SFX: SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS OFF MIC AND THEN DOOR SWINGING OPEN

HULDA: What is it, Tad?

TAD: (panicked) It's Bert, Ma. I was giving him a drink of tea and then he started

coughing and then he just kinda slumped over.

HULDA: Hand him to me, Tad, and listen carefully. Are you listening carefully, Tad?

TAD: Yes, Ma.

HULDA: Good. I want you to run as fast as you can over to the blacksmith shop and get

Father. Tell him we need him right away. Do you understand?

TAD: Yes, Ma.

SFX: SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS RUNNING AND DOOR OPENING AND SLAMMING

HULDA: Heavenly Father, if it be Thy will to take my son, let it be so. But I pray Thee if it is

not, bring him back to me.

SFX: SOUND OF DOOR BURSTING OPEN THEN TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS

TAD: I brought Pa, Ma! He's right behind me!

JESSE: What happened, Hulda? Give the little general to me.

HULDA: John is on his way with his doctor's bag, but it's too late. He's not breathing,

Jesse.

JESSE: No, he is not. I'm afraid he is with the Lord now.

HULDA: Poor, poor Herbert. What will we do, Jesse?

JESSE: There is nothing more that can be done. He has slipped off the mortal coil of this

world and moved on to the next.

HULDA: Oh Jesse. He was so very young.

JESSE: Pull this sheet up over him to give him his rest.

SFX: DOOR OPENING AND FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING

JOHN: I came as soon as I could. Where is the boy?

HULDA: (weeping) Oh John. I fear you are too late. We have pulled the sheet over the

little general.

JOHN: No! As a doctor, I must see for myself. How long has he been gone?

TAD: It just happened a minute ago, Uncle John. But look at his color! He is gone for

certain.

JOHN: Have some faith, boy! All may not be lost. I may perhaps pull him back from the

great divide. Now uncover him.

SFX: SOUND OF SHEET BEING THROWN BACK

JOHN: Breathe, boy – breathe!

SFX: SOUND OF SHAKING OF BODY

SFX: SOUND OF TAD GASPING

JESSE: Good Lord, man! Have you no respect for the dead? Hulda – tell your brother to

leave his poor body in peace!

JOHN: Unhand me, Jesse. Hulda, tell your husband to unhand me! It is the boy's only

chance.

HULDA: Please, Jesse. John is a doctor. We must place our trust in him and our faith in

the Lord.

SFX: SMALL COUGHING SOUND THEN LIGHT WHIMPERS

HULDA: Merciful heavens! The boy is breathing!

JOHN: He is back with us — at least for now.

JESSE: Praise God – you have saved him.

TAD: You did it, Uncle John! You saved my brother! (to Bert) You hear that? You're

going to be okay, Herbert!

HULDA: Our son will grow up to be a great man. God's blessing is on the Hoover house

this day!

SFX: EXCITING MUSIC STING UP AND UNDER

#### Act II: Westward Adventures

SFX: SEGUE TO SOUND OF TRAIN CHUGGING SLOW SOUND BUILDING

NARR: Nine years later, a world had changed for young Herbert Hoover. Now but

eleven years old, we find him at the end of a journey across the country to a new

home.

SFX: SOUND OF TRAIN WHISTLE BLAST THEN CHUGGING SLOW SOUND FADE

SISSY: I can't believe we're almost there! Won't it to be nice to be back home, Toby?

TOBY: It sure will, Sissy. Des Moines was nice, but it was far too crowded for me.

SISSY: Well, it does have over twenty thousand people there.

TOBY: Why, that's twenty thousand sets of encyclopedias that Father will be able to

sell! We'll be rich! (pause) Say, what are you looking at?

SISSY: That boy over there. He's been riding by himself ever since we got on the train.

TOBY: That's over three whole days! (whistles) Golly, I wonder where his parents are?

SISSY: Oh that poor little boy. He must be so scared. (pause) And brave.

TOBY: What do you mean brave? He doesn't look any bigger than me, and I'm two

years older than you are.

SISSY: Well, I'm going to go talk to him.

TOBY: You better not, Sissy Davidson. You know what Mother said about talking to

strangers!

SISSY: Never you mind that, Toby. I'm just going to say hello.

TOBY: I'm going to go tell Mother!

SISSY: Oh poo to you. I'm going to go talk to him. (pause, then to Herbert) Hello there.

My name's Sissy. What's yours?

BERT: Hello, Sissy. I'm Herbert Hoover, but most people call me Bert.

SISSY: Where are your mother and father, Bert? I haven't seen them at all this whole

trip.

BERT: My father died when I was six, and my mother got sick and died last year.

SISSY: Oh, that's so awful! Are you all alone?

BERT: We had to split up our family. I am going out to stay with my Uncle John for

a while.

SISSY: So you're making this long trip all by yourself?

BERT: I know a family from West Branch that's on the train, but they're in another train

car.

SISSY: My goodness! Do you have enough food?

BERT: I am fine. My aunt in Iowa sent me with a box of boiled eggs and sandwiches.

And I still have the two dimes that she gave me for emergencies. And I have

these.

SFX: SOUND OF CLINKING ROCKS

SISSY: Are those arrowheads? Where in the world did you get them?

BERT: I collected lots of them when I was staying with my uncle Laban Miles down in

Oklahoma Indian country. The Indians taught me where all the best hunting and

fishing spots were. One day I caught a fish that was (pause) this big!

SISSY: Gosh, that's huge! (pause) Those arrowheads sure are pretty. May I hold one?

BERT: Sure you can, Sissy. This one is made from flint. (pause) And here's my favorite.

It's carved out of obsidian.

SISSY: Obsidian? What's that?

BERT: It comes from volcanoes.

SISSY: (somewhat taken aback) Volcanoes? Are there volcanoes down in Oklahoma?

BERT: (nonchalantly) There were a lot of them back a long time ago, but they're not

active anymore.

SISSY: Golly, Bert. You sure know a lot about rocks and minerals.

BERT: Being down in Indian country really got me interested in them.

SFX: TRAIN WHISTLE

SFX: SOUND OF APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS

TOBY: There she is, Mother – talking to that boy just like I said.

MOTHER: Now Toby. Stop trying to get your sister in trouble. He looks like a very nice

young man. (to Herbert) Hello, young man. Are you on your way home from

visiting out east?

BERT: No, ma'am. I am from West Branch, Iowa. I am going to stay with my Uncle John

in Newberg.

MOTHER: Newberg? That is our next stop.

CONDUCTOR: (calling, fading in from off mic) Newberg! Next stop, Newberg, Oregon.

(pause then fade off mic) Newberg! Next stop, Newberg Oregon. (fade out)

SFX TRAIN WHISTLE THEN SOUND OF TRAIN SLOWING

MOTHER: I can see the station coming from around the bend. You had better get your

things together, young man. We're almost there.

BERT: I appreciate your kindness and concern, ma'am. I have all of my things beside

me in this satchel.

MOTHER: All of your worldly belongings in that one bag?

BERT: Yes, ma'am. But with my health and a full stomach, I have need for nothing else.

SFX: SOUNDS OF TRAIN SLOWING TO A STOP AND THEN SOUNDS OF PEOPLE

MOVING AND TALKING INDISTINCTLY FADING OFF MIC

MOTHER: All right, young man. You had better get along. Good luck to you.

BERT: Thank you, ma'am.

SISSY: (calling ) Good bye, Herbert. It was very nice to meet you!

HERBERT: (fading off mic and into the indistinct crowd sounds) Good bye.

MOTHER: What a brave little man. May the Lord bless and keep him.

SFX: CROWD SOUNDS FADE OUT

SFX: MUSICAL STING UP AND UNDER

Act III: The college years

NARR: As the years passed, the Lord did indeed bless and keep our hero. Now ten years later, the years have changed the wayward orphan into a tall, and ruggedly handsome man. Rich in character if not worldly things, he takes an opportunity

to enroll in the newly established Stanford University and make his voice heard

in a world that had been previous closed to him.

SFX: REGAL ACADEMIC BELL TOLL IN BACKGROUND SEGUE TO SMALLER RINGING OF

HAND BELL OFF MIC

MAN 1 (shouting off mic) Election day! Election day! Come on, you Stanford students!

Make your voice heard in the Stanford University student body elections.

(fading off mic then out) Election day! Election day!

SFX: FADE OUT SMALL HAND BELL

EDITH: Afternoon, Martha.

MARTHA: Oh, hello, Edith. Have you voted in the student body elections yet?

EDITH: No, I just can't decide. Last night at the mixer Wendell Tolliver tried to get me to

say I would vote for him and the rest of his Sigma Alpha friends, but I just don't

know.

MARTHA: Those boys and their Greek fraternities! If you ask me, I think those rowdy

mixers are the only thing those Sigma Alphas do care about. Why I heard that

one last month went on until almost ten o'clock at night! Who knows how late

they would have kept carrying on if the proper authorities had not been

notified?

EDITH: Maybe we should vote for those non-fraternity people that won last year. What

were they called – the Barbarian Party?

MARTHA: They couldn't have come up with a more fitting name, if you ask me. Barbarians,

indeed – they need to show respect for those who are worthy to lead.

EDITH: Well, that Herbert Hoover did do a good job as class treasurer. Remember how

much debt there was before he got into office?

MARTHA: I know. How many times did he deny our social gathering reimbursement

requests? That money could have been of great help to us.

EDITH: He was as fair with us as he was with anyone. He stated his belief that it wasn't

the student government's role to finance our fun.

MARTHA: He's just plain stingy if you ask me.

EDITH: Herbert Hoover might be stingy, but his wise money management brought the

Junior Class budget back in balance for all of us.

MARTHA: Well, yes, but still – we need our leaders to be from a certain – ahem – social

class. Not only aren't Herbert and his friends even (emphatically) in a fraternity, but they make a big joke out of it by calling themselves the Barbarians.

(dismissively) Barbarians, indeed.

CHARLES: Did I hear you ladies talking about our esteemed class treasurer, Herbert Hoover?

MARTHA: Oh, hello, Charles. You ought to know that it isn't polite to eavesdrop.

CHARLES: Oh, well then, I suppose neither of you would be interested in hearing a little tidbit that I overheard about Herbert at the baseball field.

EDITH: Oh, Charles. You are so awful! How can you tease us like that? Please tell us.

MARTHA: Yes, Charles. Please.

CHARLES: Well, all right – if you insist. Well, I'm sure you know about the important visitor who was on campus yesterday.

EDITH: Of course – everybody knows that former president Benjamin Harrison was here to deliver another of his Constitutional Law lectures.

MARTHA: But what does that have to do with Herbert? I know he wasn't able to come because he was managing the baseball team at the time.

CHARLES: Well, after President Harrison was done with his lecture, he went down to the baseball field to take in the game. And he walked right through the gate without paying.

EDITH: Well, no one would expect a former president of the United States to have to spend twenty five cents to buy a ticket to watch a Stanford baseball game.

CHARLES: Most people, maybe, but not Herbert – as team manager he's responsible for all the gate receipts.

MARTHA: No, you don't mean...

CHARLES: That's right – he marched right up to Mister Harrison and...

EDITH: He had the nerve to approach the former president of the United States and ask

him to buy a baseball ticket? I don't believe it!

MARTHA: What happened? You must tell us, Charles! What happened?

CHARLES: Well, I wouldn't have believed it either if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, but

right there and then, President Harrison handed Herbert a whole dollar and said

he'd not only pay for his own ticket, but that he'd take three more to boot!

EDITH: My goodness! Can you imagine how brave Herbert had to be?

MARTHA: Brave nothing – that sounds like nothing more than pure cheek to me. The gall of

that man!

CHARLES: Well, all I know is that anyone who believes that much in having everyone pull

their fair weight has my vote.

EDITH: He certainly sounds like the man for me.

MARTHA: Why Edith Stafford – bite your tongue! Mooning over a man like Herbert

Hoover – have you no shame? Anyway, I hear that another woman has caught

his eye of late.

EDITH: Surely you don't mean that awful tomboy Lou Henry?

MARTHA: Shh...I wouldn't let her hear you say that. I've heard she can run, rope, and ride

as well as any man around. She would make quick work of you if she heard you

talking like that about her.

EDITH: Oh poo. What could Herbert see in that old tomboy, anyway?

MARTHA: Well, the way I heard it, he's been smitten with her ever since they met at

the geology soiree at Professor Johnson's house.

CHARLES: My housemate Tyler Spenceton said that they were lab partners last spring.

EDITH: Enough already. You have both made your point crystal clear. But that's not

going to stop me from voting for him today. He's the best man for Stanford!

SFX: TRIUMPHANT PATRIOTIC MUSIC UP AND UNDER FOR FIVE SECONDS

Act IV: Engineering opportunity

NARR: Now, a man of letters, follow our protagonist as he opens the door to the wider

world. Our scene is a large opulently decorated office. A well-dressed, powerful-

looking man hunches over his elegant desk in keen concentration.

BEWICK: (to himself in concentrated fashion with English accent) Red thread over the

hook. Black thread under....

SFX: KNOCK ON DOOR

BEWICK: (gruffly) Yes? I had asked not to be disturbed. My train leaves at three.

SFX: SOUND OF DOOR OPENING

SECRETARY: Mr. Bewick, sir. I am sorry to interrupt the preparations for your fishing trip, but

a Mister Hoover is here to see you about the overseas position.

BEWICK: Blast it. A man gets so little time for relaxation. (pause) Very well. Send him in.

The sooner I can send him on his way, the sooner I can get back to finishing tying

this fly.

SFX: SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS THEN CLOSING OF DOOR

BEWICK: Yes, my good man? Make it short – a fishing junket is waiting for me.

BERT: Good afternoon, Mister Bewick. I come about the engineering position within

your overseas gold mining operations.

BEWICK: (starting to laugh derisively) Oh no, no. Certainly not. This will never do.

BERT: Pardon me, sir? I come recommended by my former supervisor Mister

Louis (LOO-IE) Janin (JHAH-NIHN).

BEWICK: (laughing more openly) And might I inquire as to your age, sir?

BERT: Twenty-two, sir.

BEWICK: Indeed, I thought as much. It appears as though my old friend Louis Janin has put

me up for some sort of practical joke.

BERT: Pardon me, sir? I am afraid I do not understand.

BEWICK: Of course you don't, my lad, as it would appear that you are but a pawn in

Louis's elaborate prank. Evidently he took issue with my desire for an

experienced gold mining engineer approximately thirty-five years of age with

approximately seventy-five years of experience. (laughing) Ho ho ho. Tell me,

son, how long have you had that awkward moustache?

BERT: I admit it is a recent acquisition, sir, but I am well capable for the position.

Please, take a look at this.

SFX: SOUND OF RUSTLING PAPER

BERT: Louis sends this letter of introduction as to my credentials.

SFX: SOUND OF SNATCHING THEN UNFOLDING PAPER

BEWICK: Ahem. (pause) I see... (pause) Mister Hoover. I full well understand that you

come highly recommended, but I asked him to send a man, not a boy. Now if

you will excuse me, I need to get back to preparing for my trip.

BERT: Very well, sir. I certainly hope your mine management shows better foresight

than your tackle larder.

BEWICK: (indignantly) I beg your pardon, my good man? Clarify yourself!

BERT: Well, I see from the trophies mounted on your wall your fondness for Coho

Salmon.

BEWICK: Indeed, they are the royal monarch of the waters. I have commissioned the best

guide in the in the northwest solely for this trip.

BERT: I thought as much. But might I ask as to why you seem to be tying Cedar River

larvae files?

BEWICK: (proudly) You have a keen eye, young man. I have tied over a dozen of them

myself under his advice. And at no small investment of time, I might add.

BERT: That is truly a shame, Mister Bewick, as the time for their molting was over four

months ago. No fish worth his salt would give that fly a second glance. Are you

sure that he instructed you to tie them?

BEWICK: Indeed, young man. I have his instructions right here.

BERT: Arriving in April. It appears that he is under the impression that you were to be

there earlier in the year.

BEWICK: Well, that is when I had originally planned the trip, but then business delayed it

until now. But, certainly, it shouldn't make that much of a difference, should it?

BERT: Well, having been fishing salmon all across the county since I was three, I'd use

a rolled Muddler minnow, but being such a young pup, what would I know?

(pause) Well, I should be going now. Good luck on your trip.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS AND DOOR OPENING

BEWICK: Wait! (pause) Wait a moment, young man. Are you certain about this...this

Muddler fly you mentioned?

BERT: As certain as I am that I could run your operations overseas. Oh well, it has been

a pleasure, sir.

BEWICK: Now now, perhaps I was a bit hasty in dismissing your credentials, young man.

My train is not scheduled to leave until three. Tell me more about your

experiences with my dear friend, Louis. (pause) And perhaps along the way,

we can touch a little bit more on how long would it take you to tie up a few of

those flies before I have to leave.

SFX: LIGHT SPRIGHTLY MUSIC UP AND UNDER FOR FIVE SECONDS

ACT V: The loyal leader

#### SFX: SEGUE TO DARKER OMINOUS MARTIAL MUSIC UP AND UNDER

NARR: Nineteen fifteen. Years of successful and fruitful mine stewardship have allowed Herbert Hoover the means to shift his focus to the needs of his fellow man. There could be no better time for him to walk onto the world's stage as The Great War has torn proud Europe in two. American involvement yet two years in the future, Hoover leaps to act when the fragile flow of foods to the innocent has been severed, threatening millions with slow and cruel starvation. Yet, to an end, the great humanitarian never wavered in keeping the interests of his countryman first and foremost in his mind.

#### SFX: SEGUE TO CALMER MUSIC THEN FADE OUT

NARR: Our scene begins on a warm fall afternoon in a small northern Minnesota town.

An elderly woman sits quietly on her porch awaiting news from the outside world.

CHILD: Nana! Nana! The post is here! There's a letter from Jules!

MOTHER: From Jules? Praise the Lord! Bring it to me, child.

CHILD: Here you go, Nana. What does it say?

SFX: SOUND OF ENVELOPE BEING TORN OPEN AND LETTER UNFOLDED

MOTHER: (read as voiceover) My dearest Mother. I regret the long time it has been since I

last wrote to you. Mercifully, under the Lord's watchful eye I have come to no

harm here in the towns and fields of Belgium... (cross fade to Jules's voice)

SFX: SOUNDS OF GUNS AND CANNON BLASTS IN THE DISTANCE

JULES: ...despite the many well armed German forces we encounter on a daily

basis. The eyes of the Belgian people, while still showing signs of hunger, have

moved beyond the panicked and desperate horror that we encountered when

we arrived in April on our way to distribute food to the needy. While

the people owe their thanks to Mister Hoover, no one is more beholden to this

great man than I, for it is my thought that he saved my very life.

Worry not, dear Mother, for now I am safe from harm, but it is by this that I am

so long in writing to you...

SFX: SOUND OF HARP LIKE MUSIC SIGNIFYING TRANSITIONAL SEGUE

SFX: SOUND OF SHARP RAP ON DOOR

SCHMIDT: Jah (YA)? Who is it?

AIDE: Herr Hoover is here to see you, mine Colonel.

SCHMIDT: Ah, undoubtedly about that Americaner spy we are holding. Send him in.

AIDE: Jawohl (YAH-VOHL), mine Colonel. (off mic) This way, Herr Hoover.

SFX: SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING AND THEN SOUND OF DOOR SHUTTING

SCHMIDT: Ah, Herr Hoover. What a pleasure it is we meet again. Please, have a seat. And what is the reason for this unexpected meeting?

HOOVER: You know damn well why I'm here, Schmidt. I have been informed that you have been holding one of my men for the past three days. I want him released this instant.

SCHMIDT: Herr Hoover, we agreed to allow you and your men behind the battle lines to distribute food to the Belgian people, not provide an avenue of information for our British enemies. We have reason to believe that the man we are holding is a spy.

HOOVER: (indignantly) A spy? Jules Olsen is nothing of the sort. Every man in this operation is here for one and only one reason – to provide relief supplies for the Belgian people. Each has signed an oath of neutrality that they have sworn to uphold. I stake my reputation as a gentleman on this! I demand he be released this instant!

SCHMIDT: I am not so certain that this can be done, Herr Hoover. My men found your man drawing sketches of our defenses in a very sensitive military area far away from the food distribution corridor. Here –

#### SFX: SOUND OF PAPERS THROWN ACROSS DESK

SCHMIDT: Take a look at these.

HOOVER: But these are simple drawings of buildings. How can you be so sure about them?

SCHMIDT: As a soldier in charge of my men's lives I cannot afford to assume he is not a spy.

HOOVER: (calmly) But how can you be certain? Colonel Schmidt, I'm certain that we can be reasonable about this. Our men share the burden of being so young and so

very far from their homes. Do you remember those days?

SCHMIDT: Jah, Herr Hoover. I remember.

HOOVER: Then you also remember that with that youth comes the mistakes of youth. War

and espionage are old men's games. Please, at least bring him to me so I may

talk to him. If he proves to be a spy, I will wash my hands of him. If not, I ask

you release him to me.

SCHMIDT: But Herr Hoover, upon how is this to be based? Solely upon your word?

HOOVER: Colonel, my word is my bond. In nothing do I put higher value.

SCHMIDT: Very well, Herr Hoover. Very well.

SFX: BUZZING SOUND OF INTERCOM

SCHMIDT: (off mic) Mueller, bring the prisoner to me!

AIDE: Jawohl, mine Colonel!

SFX: SOUND OF DOOR OPENING AND ENTRY OF FOOTSTEPS WITH CHAIN ACCENTS

AIDE: The prisoner as requested, mine Colonel.

SFX: SOUND OF DOOR SHUTTING

JULES: Colonel, as an American citizen I must protest this type of treatment I have

received over the past...

HOOVER: It seems to me, Olson, that you would be wise to place more focus on listening

than making demands.

JULES: Mister Hoover? Praise the Lord! But what are you doing here?

HOOVER: I would think the more pressing question, Olson, is what are (emphatically) you

doing here? The Colonel here seems to think that you are a spy. (more

aggressively) So, Olson, what is it? Are you a spy? Well...are you? Are you?

SFX: SOUND OF BANGING ON TABLE

HOOVER: Hundreds of thousands of dollars have gone into this relief operation. I will not

have anyone jeopardizing the work we are doing! So out with it, man! Are you a

spy or not?

JULES: (cracking) No, sir. I swear to you, I am not a spy!

HOOVER: Then what were you doing away from the rest of your company, man?

JULES: I was looking at the buildings and got lost, sir.

HOOVER: Lost? How could this be?

JULES: I have been studying to be an architect and I stopped to sketch out a design and

when I looked I realized everyone had moved on without me.

HOOVER: Why would you bother drawing buildings in a war zone? Whatever could you

have been thinking? You have work you should have been doing!

JULES: As I said, sir, I'm studying to be an architect and the buildings are so

breathtaking. I've never seen any structure in Minnesota more than 100 years

old — and those are cabins. Some of these magnificent structures date back to

the middle ages. I had never seen such graceful use of angle and line. I...

HOOVER: If that were the case, why did you not tell the Colonel's men when they captured

you?

JULES: I tried, sir. But they were questioning me in German. I was so scared.

Then after saying nothing, I didn't think they would believe me.

HOOVER: There, Schmidt we have heard enough. This man is no spy. You may let him go.

SCHMIDT: Herr Hoover, I must protest! I cannot let this man go solely on your word.

HOOVER: You will let him go. The man is no spy. He is an American who is under my

command. We have signed a pledge of neutrality. Our only goal is to feed the hungry and prevent them from starving. Without your cooperation we will pull up stakes and bring our operation to a close. Do you want the deaths of so many to be on your hands merely over a few meager sketches by a boy far from home? Or perhaps you have a means for feeding them? (pause) I am a very busy man, Colonel. I am afraid I haven't the luxury to wait all day for your answer.

SCHMIDT:

All right, all right. You win, Herr Hoover. I release him to you. (to Jules) To have such a protector...you know, you are a very lucky young man, do you not? A very lucky man, indeed.

#### SFX: HARP LIKE SEGUE BACK TO READING

JULES: Today we prepare to move out. This cruel war has assured that there will be many more hungry in need of feeding. But I, thanks to the brave intercession of

Mister Hoover, am a free man. Mama, I owe my life to Mister Herbert Hoover.

He is the greatest man I have ever met.

MOTHER: Lord, bless Mister Herbert Hoover. What a great man.

SFX: REGAL MUSIC UP AND UNDER FOR FIVE SECONDS

ACT VII The great Mississippi flood

SFX: SEGUE TO THUNDERCLAP AND THEN RAIN UP THEN UNDER

SFX: COUNTRY BLUES GUITAR (A LA SUN HOUSE/ROBERT JOHNSON) BED UP AND

UNDER WHILE MAN SINGS, IDEALLY WITH SCRATCHY RECORD SORT OF SOUND

SINGER: (semi-scatting) Well well well

Well well well well

Well well well well

Well well well well

Come sits yours self on down...and a story I will describe
I say sit yours self on down...a great story I will describe

Bout a man come down and save us...save us from Mi'sippi tides

SINGER: Rain come fallin' down...fall down 'pon Mississippi way

Say the rain come fallin' down...fall down Mississippi way

Cruel water keep rising...pray ol' levy hold back that rain

#### SFX: SEGUE TO SOUND OF NEWS BROADCAST ON RADIO FADING IN

ANNCR: (read with rapid news announcer style) Dateline Cairo, Illinois: New Year's Day
1927. Flood waters from the rain-engorged Mississippi washed over the walls of
this Southern Illinois town. Mississippi River Commission engineers assured
Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover that the levees in place would hold.
In a brief statement given on his way to join President Coolidge for New
Year's supper, Secretary Hoover promised to keep a watchful eye on the issue.

#### SFX: RADIO FADE AND MUSIC FADE BACK UP

SINGER: Well, the men they come a callin'...say we need you sweat and blood

Yes, them men all come a callin'...tell we need some sweat and blood

Take a shovel to the shoreline... pray we can hold back the flood.

Come back the next morning...house and farm all washed away

Yes, I come back in the morning...house and farm be washed away

Mister Hoover give us shelter...little girls got safe place to stay.

SFX: SEGUE TO SOUND OF NEWS BROADCAST ON RADIO FADING IN

ANNCR:

(read with rapid news announcer style) Dateline Greenville, Mississippi. In an epic battle of man against nature, thousands toil around the clock to fortify levees to hold back the raging floodwaters. Coordinating the efforts of the Red Cross and eight other relief agencies, Secretary of Commerce Hoover has assembled an armada of over six hundred relief ships and has organized vast tent cities for the tens of thousands of refugees. Recalling ironic shades of his work saving our war-torn European brothers from starvation a decade ago, Secretary Hoover stopped along the route on his way to the scene of the disaster to personally solicit aid from leaders in over ninety communities. On each stop his message was the same.

**HOOVER:** 

(filtered scratchy sound bite) A couple of thousand refugees are coming. They've got to have accommodations. Huts. Water mains. Sewers. Streets. Dining halls. Meals. Doctors. Everything. And you haven't got months to do it. You haven't got weeks. You've got hours.

#### SFX: RADIO FADE MUSIC FADE BACK UP

SINGER:

Well, muddy water keep a rollin'...spitting dirt and silt and sand
Yes, dat muddy water keep on rollin'...leavin' dirt and silt and sand
Water's going back down Lord...sink back below the levee again

Well, I dreamed I saw old Noah...but I waved him right on by
Yes, I dreamed I saw ol' Noah...but waved that ol' boat right on by
No need to stop for me, friend...Mister Hoover stay by my side.

Oh oh oh well well

Oh oh oh oh.

#### SFX: FADE OUT GUITAR

ACT VIII: Return to West Branch

SFX: SOUND OF TRAIN CHUGGING AND WHISTLE OFF MIC

MAYOR: All right, the train's coming – let's try it one more time.

SFX: BRASS BAND PLAYING THREE BARS OF HAIL TO THE CHIEF

MAYOR: (shouting over din of band to quiet them) Okay, okay! That's enough, boys –

save some breath for when he gets here.

REPORTER: Mayor! Can I get a few words from you for the public?

MAYOR: Ah, yes – Mister Cooper from the Register. I'm glad to see you still feel our little

town is important to your readers in Des Moines.

REPORTER: Well, the eyes of the world are on West Branch today. What do you have

scheduled for the candidate?

MAYOR: When the next president of the United States comes back to his home town,

(emphatically) you don't set the schedule – he does.

REPORTER: Oh come now, mayor – the election isn't until November. What makes you think

he is going to win?

MAYOR: Listen here – Herbert Hoover is the best man for the job. Bar none. And you can

quote me on that. When Herbert Hoover sets his mind to a problem, things get

solved. I don't need to remind you about that flooding last year, do I?

REPORTER: No, sir, but...

MAYOR: Or how the work he did getting planes in the air when he was Secretary of

Commerce? Not to mention the work he did getting radio up and running across

the country. (teasingly) But, of course, you probably won't want to write about

that – radio being your competition and all in the news game.

REPORTER: What about his statement that any man worth his salt should make his first

million before he was thirty? How's that going to play with the common working

man? Just looking around, West Branch seems to be running a bit light on

millionaires.

MAYOR: Excuse me, sir, but in this year of our Lord nineteen twenty eight, we have never

been more blessed or prosperous. Look at the facts: we have more home

ownership than ever before in our nation's history. The common man is

investing in the stock market alongside the old money. There's room and

opportunity for everyone. And Herbert Hoover's the man to protect that.

REPORTER: Well, yes, but for the working man...

MAYOR: But nothing! Tell me -- how many of the candidates have been working directly

with US Steel to bring the twelve hour day down to a reasonable ten hours?

REPORTER: Well, given his connections in the government...

MAYOR: Exactly – Herbert Hoover has more experience than all the other candidates put

together. Tell me – how many Belgians did they save during the Great War?

Five? Twenty? A hundred?

REPORTER: Well, not directly, but...

MAYOR: The man's life's work is beyond reproach. Tell me. How many books – including

texts that have become standards in the field – have the other candidates written?

REPORTER:

Well...

SFX:

TRAIN WHISTLE AND TRAIN SOUND OFF MIC FADING IN

MAYOR:

Now if you will excuse me, I must get ready for Iowa's favorite son and, Lord willing, the next president of the United States. (pause then yelling off mic)

Start the band, boys! Here he comes!

SFX:

BRASS BAND WITH LIVELY HAIL TO THE CHIEF (or lowa song) UP AND UNDER

Epilogue

NARR:

Friends. We come to the end of our story tonight that has traced our hero from his humble beginnings to the great man he is today. Call him what you will – the Master of Emergencies, the Great Humanitarian, or Liberty's Protector – Herbert Hoover is the best man for the Presidency. (pause)

SFX:

MUSIC SWELL THEN UNDER

NARR:

Remember, when you are in the privacy of the voting booth on November Sixth vote wisely. (emphatically) Vote Hoover.

The future of our great nation is in your hands.

SFX:

MUSIC SWELL THEN OUT

END

### Artists-in-Residence at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site offers two residencies each of two to four weeks from May through October. Residencies are open to all professional American artists. The residencies allow selected artists to pursue their art forms in the contemplative setting of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. The National Historic Site provides lodging and a secure, environmentally-controlled place to lay out equipment and supplies at no cost to the artist.

During the residencies, the artists interact informally with the public, present public interpretive programs, and produce a piece of artwork for the park's collection. Through their artwork, Artists-in-Residence provide opportunities for park visitors to make meaningful connections with the cultural and natural resources of the National Historic Site.

Will Anderson, assistant professor at Central Michigan University, is an award-winning radio dramatist, with regional and national awards, including two National Audio Theater Festival awards in 2007 and 2003, and the 2006 National Broadcasting Society Region 2 Best Comedy Award. He was Artist-in-Residence in July of 2008.

For more information about the Artist-in-Residence Program at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, contact us at:

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site 110 Parkside Drive PO Box 607 West Branch, IA 52358

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